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Mr. WEBSTER'S
FAST-SERMON.

JULY 14, 1774.



Mr. WEBSTER'S

LAST SERMON.

JULY 14 1844

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THE MISERY AND DUTY OF AN OPPRESS'D
AND ENSLAV'D PEOPLE, REPRESENTED
IN A

S E R M O N

Delivered at SALISBURY, *July 14, 1774.*

On a Day set apart for FASTING and PRAYER,
On Account of approaching public Calamities.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

By SAMUEL WEBSTER, A. M.

Pastor of a Church in SALISBURY.

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THE MISTERY OF DUTY
AND PASSIVE FORCE
IN A

S E R M O N

Delivered at DARTMOUTH COLLEGE
On a Day's report for Faculty and Students
On Account of approaching public examinations

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST

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A

FAST-SERMON.



NEHEMIAH IX. 36,—38.

Behold we are Servants this Day ! And for the Land that thou gavest unto our Fathers, to eat the Fruit thereof, and the Good thereof, behold we are Servants in it !

And it yieldeth much Increase unto the Kings : which thou hast set over us, because of our Sins : Also they have Dominion over our Bodies and over our Cattle, at their Pleasure : And we are in great Distress !

And because of all this, we make a sure Covenant, and write it, and our Princes, Levites and Priests seal unto it.



N

NEHEMIAH, the author of this book, was a great officer in the court of Artaxerxes, king, or rather, as we now speak, Emperor of Persia (being his Cup-bearer). Which honorable and profitable post, it seems, tempted him to tarry behind, when his

his brethren return'd from captivity, about thirteen years before, under *Zerubbabel* and *Ezra*, in order to rebuild the temple and city ; which had now, according to the prophecy, lain waste seventy years.

But when he found, by an account given him by some of his brethren who had return'd from Judea, the yet desolate condition of his ancient city and country, being a good man and a true patriot, he was greatly affected, and pass'd several days in *fasting* and *tears* and doleful *retirement* : And then address'd himself to God in the most *humble prayer* and *supplication* for them.

The substance of which is thus given by a learned paraphrast.

" Lord of heaven and governor of all things ! who art infinitely just and tremendous in thy judgments upon the disobedient ; and faithful to all thy promises to thy dutiful servants : Lend a gracious ear to the cries of a distress'd Israelite, humbly confessing his own and his father's iniquities ; and lamenting the calamities of his nation, thine own chosen people.

Let it suffice that they have thus long felt and smarted under the heavy strokes of thy righteous displeasure, and, with all contrition beg again to be restor'd to thy wonted favor and protection.

Remember how thy earliest sure threats of punishing their wickedness with the loss of their dear country, were still accompanied with a gra-

cious promise, that their repentance should at last retrieve it again; and cause them still to be own'd by thee for thine inheritance; for whole lakes thou hast done such marvellous things in the sight of all nations.

Have mercy upon the multitude of the guilty, for the sake of those who are truly penitent, and sincerely desire thy true honour and worship.

Make me the instrument of procuring their safety and taking away their reproach, by blessing the endeavours I am now going to use with the Persian Emperor in their favour.

Here was a *true patriot* indeed! Here was a man who sought the good of his country! and sought it from principle, and in the right way!

First he *mourn'd* for their distress; then he *fasted and pray'd*, and besought the God of Heaven to *direct* and prosper him; And then he *used* the most likely *means* he could think of to procure their relief; which was by using his interest with the *Emperor* to get a commission to go himself and help them.

And God prosper'd him!—He went and reliev'd them in a most wonderful manner!

O how happy for us if we had such a friend in the British Court, who had such influence with the King in this evil day! What great things might he, under God, do for us! But alas tho we have, like the distress'd Jews, many enemies, yet we have no such *powerful friend* to exert himself in our favour!

This

This *great* and *good* man now dwelt in *Shushan*, (said to have been the pleasantest city then in the world,) he dwelt in the king's presence and was his *favourite*; and had great *riches* and *honour*: yet he felt for the afflictions of his people, and chose rather to go and suffer with them, that he might promote their welfare, than to enjoy all the pleasures of that splendid court.

Who can sufficiently admire his excellent spirit, and his excellent conduct amidst his country's distresses!

He came and encouraged the Jews, and set about repairing the city, and finished it, though he was *derided* and *counteracted* and plotted against continually; and though they were called *rebels* by many *powerful enemies* in the neighbourhood, and even by a number of the NOBLES OF JUDAH, who join'd with their heathen adversaries against him.

After this, though they were in their own land, dwelt again in their *city* Jerusalem, and had the worship of the temple restor'd, yet they were in a *poor, weak* and *distress'd* condition to what they were before their late troubles.

And therefore we read, in the beginning of this Chapter—*That, in the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting and with sackcloths, and with earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.*

Then

Then they recounted the many signal favors to them and to their fathers, and the ill returns they had made: and then pray that God will put an end to their grievous troubles.

Howbeit (say they) thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.

And the prayer concludes in the words of my text, wherein they recount their calamities, and promise to renew their covenant with God.

Behold we are servants this day; and for the land which thou gavest unto our fathers, to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof; behold we are servants in it.

And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings which thou hast set over us, because of our sins. Also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure; and we are in great distress. That is, though we are, through divine goodness, in our own land, yet we are but servants and tributaries. We are not allow'd to call the country our own: The Lord, indeed, gave this good land to our fathers to improve and enjoy all the blessings of it: But now those whom the Persian Emperor hath placed over us—(whether by right or not) are our Lords and Masters: And we hold all our blessings, even our Estates and Lives, but as tenants at Will and Pleasure.

It yieldeth much increase (for it is a good land) unto the Kings, which for our sins, God

Behold they are in distress

suffers to lord it over us. But we can call nothing our own. For, they claim absolute dominion over our Bodies, our Cattle and all that we have, to call for it and dispose of it at their pleasure. So that, in a word, we are in great distress.

And, because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our Princes, Levites and Priests seal unto it.

That is, (as one expresses the sense) "and though even what we now enjoy be much more than we deserve, yet do thou still cast an eye of further pity upon the misery of our condition, except our present repentance, and that solemn engagement we now, all of us lay ourselves under, to be obedient for the future, to thy holy commands."

Upon these words, thus introduced, and opened, I shall make the following observations, viz.

I. That some people may justly call the land they live in, their own, by a divine gift to their fathers.

II. That yet, such is the tyranny and oppression of the kings of the Earth, that, where there is the clearest title, the owners are sometimes deprived of it, or of the blessings of it, which is the same thing.

III. That it is, for a people's sins, when God suffers this to come upon them.

IV. That though a people are suffered to live in their own Land, and it be ever so good in itself, yet if they hold all their blessings only at the pleasure of others; and can call nothing their own, they are, strictly speaking, servants, and not freemen: and must be in great distress.

V. That

V. That it becomes such a people to fly unto God by solemn fasting and prayer, for relief, even after they have done all they can for their own preservation.

VI. If they would, on good grounds, hope for success, they should renew their covenant with God, or lay themselves under the most solemn obligations to be an obedient and holy people, for the time to come.

I. Then I observe—That some People may justly call the Land they live in, their own, by a divine gift to their fathers.

So Israel, in this prayer, call'd the land of Judea,—the land which thou gavest unto our fathers: And which therefore they implicitly call their own by inheritance from them.

And sure there was no room to dispute their title, if God, the great Proprietor of the world had a right to dispose of it: For he gave it to Israel for a possession, as the scriptures abundantly testify; so that I need not stand to quote particular passages.

This land therefore was indubitably their's, so their's, that no body under Heaven had a right to deprive them of it, nor could do it without wrong and injustice; for it was their's (as I may say) by deed of gift from the great Lord of all.

Nor were they the only people in the world who could challenge a just right and title, yea a divine one; to the country they possess'd. For God originally gave the whole Earth to the sons

of men to be divided among them. And wherever any went and found any part of the Earth unpossessed, or fairly purchased of the rightful possessors, they also might justly call it *their own land*, their proper inheritance, given them by God; though not so expressly given as Canaan was to Israel. Nor will, or can this be denied by any who pretend to have any *just possessions* on Earth: so that I need not enlarge. But may proceed to observe—

II. *That yet, such is the oppression and tyranny of the Kings of the earth, that, where there is the clearest title, the owners are sometimes deprived of it, or of the blessings of it; which is the same thing.*

So it was in the case before us. The King of Assyria came up against Israel, only from a lust of power, and to spread his dominions; came up against Israel and disquieted them in their possessions, the possessions which God had given them: yea destroyed their city and country, to which he had no pretence of right (unless it was that Abraham the ancestor of this nation anciently emigrated from Chaldea a part of his empire, which was too absurd to mention) yet he came and carried them away captive; and seventy years detained them in his own land; and grievously afflicted them.

But at length the Lord had compassion on his People, and stirred up Cyrus and afterwards other Kings to give them leave to return to their own land,

land, and rebuild their city and temple in trou-
blous times.

But yet even then they held them under tri-
bute, and challenged the disposal of them and of
all they had, at their pleasure ; because they had
power so to do, though no pretence of *right* at all.

For, if *mere conquest* gives *right*, then *right*
and *power* must be the same thing : and so every
man as well as a *King* must have a *right* to do
whatever he has *power* to do. And then there
could be no such thing as *oppression* in the world :
which is most absurd and impious to assert.

And yet this has been (I may almost say the
manner of the *Kings* of the earth,) though
they dare not avow the principle, yet they have
acted as if they thought they had a *right* to do
whatever they had *power* to do ; without paying
any regard to *right* or *wrong*. Where they were
able to overcome their neighbours, and took a
fancy to their possessions, they have made it their
practice, time out of mind, to go and seize, by
force, them and their land : sometimes carrying
them away *captive* ; and at other times suffering
them to live in their own land, as *tenants at will*
under *tribute* : and sometimes under such cruel
oppression as to deprive them of all the blessings
of a good and fruitful land. This is too plain
and melancholy a truth to dwell upon.

I proceed therefore to observe—

III. That it is for a people's sins when God
suffers this evil to come upon them.

So

So Israel acknowledged in the text, and thro' this whole prayer.

It yieldeth (say they) much increase to the King, which thou hast set over us, BECAUSE OF OUR SINS.

And whoever considers the nature of God, and the righteousness and kindness of his government, may be sure that this is always the case. For, he doth not *afflict willingly*, nor needlessly *grieve* the children of men. He cannot delight in tyranny and oppression! No, his Soul abhors it; and though he sometimes *suffers* it to punish an *ungrateful* people, who would not be drawn by the cords of a man and the bands of love; yet we see in the sacred history, that after he had punish'd his people by some *haughty tyrants*, he took his time to punish them also for their oppression. And never do we find a people forsaken of God who had not forsaken him first.

And though we are stumbled at the ways of God, when we see the world groaning for so many ages under the cruellest *tyranny* and *oppression*; yet I doubt not, could we see through the reasons of it, we should be satisfied with the divine proceedings. We should see that they were first given up to such *ignorance* or *overgrown wickedness*, that it was necessary to curb them in this *severe* and *rigorous* way.

And when they are suitably humbled and brought to repentance, he delights in granting them deliverance, and never fails of doing it. The

Scripture

Scripture history, and indeed all history, is abundant witness of this. And thereto I appeal.

And proceed—

IV. To observe, that though a people are suffered to live in their own land, and it be ever so good in itself, yet, if they hold all their blessings, only at the pleasure of others, and can call nothing their own, they are strictly speaking, *servants* and not *freemen*: and must be in great distress.

This was the very case of *Israel* about the time of this *Fest*. They were restored to their own land: But they were not allowed to call it their own. The *Persian Emperor* had an absolute power over them, and all that they had; so that they held all by the most precarious tenure—his will and pleasure. He claimed their *Cattle*, their *Silver*, their *Gold*, their *Houses* and *lands*, and even their *Persons*, and called for them and disposed of them at his pleasure. And therefore say they—*Behold, we are Servants* this day! And again—*We are Servants in it*—that is in our own Land.

And sure it was so. They were not *freemen*, but perfect *Servants*, if a foreign power had dominion over them and their substance. Such persons really have no property at all. For how can we call that *ours*, which others may call for, and take away, when they please. Every *Slave* in the world may call himself a *freeman* as well as these. And most of them with greater propriety. For most of them are allowed something which they may call *their's*.

And

And they who cannot call any thing their own; let them live in a land like Canaan, it is almost nothing to them.

It may yield much fruit, but if all besides a bare subsistence, just to keep them fit for service, must go to their masters, they may be in great distress, in the midst of the jollity of their task-masters; and pine away, as many poor souls do, amidst floods of milk and honey, wine and oyl.

And whoever looks over the world, will find, that where such an absolute dominion is claim'd over the people, they are almost universally reduc'd to every kind of distress. The world which is now groaning under bondage is a melancholy witness of this.

Could you but look into the dark places of the earth, and see the habitations of cruelty, and hear the cries and groans of the oppressed, who have no comforter, because on the side of the oppressors there is power; it would make every tender heart ache and ready to burst with grief! But I must forbear. And shall only add—That to hold our houses, our lands, our cattle and goods, and all the comforts of life, and even life it self, by so precarious a tenure as that of the absolute will and pleasure of unfeeling lawless masters, so that we may be strip'd of them all in a moment when they are out of temper, or even for every slight fault, is itself a great distress, and must embitter every comfort of life, and almost make life itself

itself a burden ; especially to those who were *born free*, and were never in bondage to any man.

And yet this is the best any can hope for, who are once depriv'd of *liberty*, or of the priviledges of freemen. I proceed to observe,

V. *That it becomes a people in such a distress'd condition to fly unto God by solemn fasting and prayer for relief, even after they have done all they can for their own preservation.*

So did Israel here. *Nehemiah* like a wise and prudent man, did not sit still and presume upon providence ; but encourag'd the Jews to arise and build the wall of their city, and make it as defensible as possible against the enemy ; and gave orders to use all caution, so as not to give their enemies any advantage, by *shutting and barring the gates* in season every night, &c.

But, like a pious man, sensible that all salvation is of the Lord, he counsel'd them not to depend upon their own *wisdom* or *strength* ; but to commit their cause to God. And therefore call'd a solemn fast to humble themselves before God, and to seek his face.

And they assembled for this end, and *mourned* before him ; and *made confession of their sins*, and poured out *supplications* to him to espouse their cause, and deliver them from their *oppressions*, and from all their *distresses* ; and restore them to that happy state of freedom they once enjoyed.

And what could be more reasonable ? For, to whom shall people go in their distress of any
C kind

kind, but unto God, who can do all things for them ? And, particularly, when they are groaning under the oppression of the great and powerful, to whom shall they go for relief, but to him that is *greater* and *higher* than they, who setteth up kings, and putteth them down, and overturns kingdoms at his pleasure, if it be necessary, to work deliverance for his people.

The Lord is a *sure refuge* in such a time of trouble. He is a *strong tower*, and whosoever flies to him shall be safe, under the shadow of his wings, against all the powers on earth.

Even the haughty *Human* shall fall before him, when he meditates mischief to the people of God. And proud *Senacherib*, when he vainly boasts of his *numbers* and *strength*, shall be struck, as by a flash of lightning, and his mighty host, in which he trusted, become in one night *dead corpses*.

He can even shut the mouths of *hungry lions*, or quench the hottest *furnace*, when his servants, who trust in him, are to be preserved.

Only then let a people engage God on their side, and they need not fear what man can do unto them.

And in order to this, God expects to be *sought* unto, in a public solemn manner ; and, that we *humble* ourselves before him.

And our Saviour has taught us, that prayer, accompanied with *fasting*, has peculiar prevalence with heaven ; having said (of the evil spirit)—*this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.*

And

And the people of God have practis'd it in all ages, and found the benefit of it : And so did *Nineveh*, when threatned with speedy destruction, and were spared.

And so have *our fathers* in their day, and we in ours.

In this way a people make a solemn appeal to God, as the great governor of the world, when the powers of earth rise up against them, and cast themselves upon him. And the Lord expects to be acknowledg'd, if we need his help : And we have no reason to look for it without.

Moreover such a day is design'd as a day of *humiliation* for our *sins*, which have procur'd the evils which are upon us. And this, if sincere, can't but be acceptable to God. And we know that he hath said—*He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* (*Luke xiv. 11.*) And if such a day is not a day of sincere humiliation, it is a mockery.

Which leads me to the next observation,

VI. *That if a people would on good grounds hope for success, they should renew their covenant with God ; or lay themselves under the most solemn obligations to be an obedient and holy people, for the time to come.*

So did Israel at this time.

And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it ; and our Princes, Levites and Priests seal unto it.

The covenant was sign'd and seal'd by the principal persons——And *the rest of the people* took a *solemn oath* to do as the subscribers had engag'd.

What the covenant was, you see in the next chapter.

First, in general they covenanted—to *walk in God's law—and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord their God; and his judgments, and his statutes*: Particularly, that they would not intermarry with the heathen—that they would keep the *sabbath* religiously—and the sabbatical year—punctually pay their tribute to the temple—and give the Priests and Levites their due—and no more *forsake the house of their God*.

And what can it signify to pretend to *humble* ourselves before God, on such a day, and to *confess our sins*, unless we also engage to forsake them, and do better for the time to come?

And if a solemn covenant was drawn up, in which we should bind ourselves to God and one another to reform the gross evils which are found among us, and to be in all things an *obedient and holy* people, it might be well.

This formal and solemn renewing the *covenant* has been practiced by some christian societies, and recommended by others. And I am ready to think it might have a good effect.

But, the least people can do on such a day is, to *resolve and engage*, in the most serious and deliberate

berate manner, to reform all our crying iniquities, which have provok'd God against us, and to *obey* and *serve* him for the time to come. Without this, they do nothing at all to purpose, and can expect no blessing. Scripture and reason both conspire to assure us of this ; and no thinking man can doubt.

Thus have I gone through with the several observations from the words, and shall now conclude with some *application* and *improvement*.

And now, methinks, almost every thing that has been said, is naturally applicable to ourselves in this evil day : And we can hardly help seeing the improvement we ought to make.

However, I shall take a little pains to *apply* it, and to press the *improvement*.

Now if any people on earth, since the Jews, have a right to call the land they live in *their own*, and to say *God gave it to our fathers*—we may say it.

About *an hundred and fifty-four years* since, our fathers were driven by the then raging persecution, out of the land of their nativity ; and came to seek in the wilds of *America* (then called *the new world*) that liberty which they were denied at home, (but little thought they should ever be denied here.) They came with the King's leave, tho' at their own expence. (and a vast expence it was, no less, by the fairest and lowest computation, than TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS STERLING, the settling this single province.) They

They found it an howling wilderness, *desolate* and *doleful* ! And about half the number of the first adventurers died the first winter under the unparallel'd hardships they suffered.

However, God was with them, and encourag'd them ; and settled them in this land ;—an handful of men from whom, with some additions afterwards, have arisen this great multitude, who now occupy the land.

And, as no body on earth had any title to this land but the *original inhabitants*—our fathers got leave of them to settle, and made peace with them, and fairly *purchas'd* their lands of them.

The king had no right to give it, nor the *people of England*, for it was not their's to give. But God gave our fathers favour in the eyes of the people of the land ; and they obtain'd *their title* to these lands ; which was as good as the people of *England* have to theirs ; or any other people under heaven. All pretences to the contrary are vain and frivolous to the last degree.

Surely then the land is *ours*. The Lord our God gave it unto our fathers : And we have it by *inheritance from them*. There is no better title this day on earth.

And yet, if a title could be given by the king, we have that also, in our charter ; which was a solemn *covenant* between *him* and our *fathers* ; in which they engag'd to be his *subjects*, though remov'd out of his dominions to the ends of the earth,

earth, on condition of their enjoying by his means, *all the rights and privileges of British subjects*; (one of which be sure was the safe enjoyment of our *property*.)

And this they depended upon enjoying when they ventur'd their lives and fortunes to extend the British empire to this end of the world.

And yet *sacred as this charter* was, and richly as we deserv'd it, by the hardships we suffer'd, and the immense advantage we have been to the land of our forefathers nativity; yet, in a popish reign, (that of James the second) our *charter* was taken away; and, so hard was our fate, after all our expensive solicitations, only the shadow of it could be recovered; tho' it was the only one lost in that general wreck of charters, which was not restored, at the revolution.

And now, after we have render'd chearfully all the service in our power to our nation—in reducing *Cape Breton, Nova-Scotia and Canada*: Some of which we did in a manner alone; and in the whole did much more than our proportion: Yet, because we reap some benefit hereby, as soon as we have struggled thro' innumerable difficulties and distresses for a century and an half, and begin some of us, to live a little comfortably in this wild-ness, they envy us our happiness, and thirst after our inheritance. And because they have squandered away the nation's money in the most shameful manner, and by this bad husbandry are got immensely in debt; behold, they threaten to
take

take away all our *liberty* and *property*, and to reduce us to *slavery* and *beggary*.

And, which is most aggravating, the king's revenue, it seems, is not helped by it.

But the money extorted from us is given to *placemen* and *pensioners* here, who are to be our task-masters to afflict us, and riot on our spoils !

Is it merely then to impoverish us that we are to be thus fleec'd to the skin ? No ! The plot is deep, and worse is yet behind ! These men are by this means to be attach'd hereby to their interest, and to be their SPIES and INFORMERS against us from time to time.

They expect letters from them like those from the enemies of Judah in the days of *Ezra*. (See *Ezra* iv. 14.) Now, FORASMUCH AS WE HAVE MAINTENANCE FROM THE KING'S PALACE, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore we have sent and certified the king, &c.

In short, their language seems to be that of the Egyptians concerning Israel, (*Exod.* i. 10, &c.) Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, &c.

And their policy was much the same. They set Task-masters over them, to afflict them. . And made their lives bitter with hard bondage—and rigorous service.

But behold ! how heaven counteracted them : For, the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

And

And when they saw that this did not do, being determin'd, if possible, by right or by wrong, to carry their point, (for tyranny once begun has no bounds) they took the most horrid method ever heard of: They sent out a *bloody decree*, and order'd the midwives to *kill every male child* as soon as it was born. Who could believe human nature capable of this? Who can think of it without horror? Blessed be God it is not quite come to this with us yet. But who knows how soon it may? *

But did the *midwives* obey the *King's decree*? No! They *feared God*, and disobey'd the King. And it was so far from displeasing God, that he preserv'd them from the wrath of the King, and *prosper'd* and *blest'd* them for *fearing God* more than *man*. And so, I doubt not, if we fear God more than man, shall we also be preserv'd and blest'd.

But what a deplorable condition are we reduc'd to, by the *tyranny* of some that are over us!

Many ways have been devis'd to oppress and enslave us: But when we sought the Lord, he appear'd for us, and deliver'd us from one snare after another. The cruel decrees against us were repeal'd: and we hop'd again to see good days. For, tho' they kept up their exorbitant claim of *making laws to bind us* IN ALL CASES WHATEVER, which included a *power* to dispose of *us*, and *all that we have*, at their will and pleasure; yet

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we

* The *murder-act* since pass'd, I think, comes but little short of it: and might justify the very thing.

we flatter'd ourselves they would never exercise this pretended right ; but it would forever lay dormant.

But we have found ourselves mistaken. They have fram'd laws to extort our money from us without our consent ; to raise a *revenue*, and so to make, at our expence, a swarm of officers, *dependent* on them and *independent* on us ; which if continued, would no doubt alone eventually destroy all our liberties.

And because we would not pay this *tax* ; but destroy'd the *engine of oppression*, when no other way was left us—Behold they have now shut up our *capital*, surrounded it with *ships*, and filled it with *soldiers*,—stop'd all their *trade*, and left them to starve without remedy, except from the *charity* of their more *humane brethren* !

And as if this was not enough to satiate their fury—*bills* have pass'd the *two houses*—and doubtless long ere now are sign'd by the *king*, * to take away every *charter-right* worth contending for, too many to be enumerated ; and too *grievous* and *oppressive* ever to be borne by any free people, if Heaven puts any lawful means in their power to prevent it.

And what further is meditated by the men of blood, we know not : But many things are to be fear'd upon too good grounds. Particularly, many think there is a design, and will be an attempt,

* The truth of this was soon confirm'd, and the *Canada Bill* added to them.

tempt, to seize our best friends, and carry them home for *tryal* ! For *tryal* did I say ? No ! For *execution* !

But the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice ! He can, and, I trust, will, prevent this horrid Insult !

May we not now adopt almost every word of my text—and say——*Behold we are servants this day, &c.*

But, let us now seriously consider, that it is for *our sins* that God suffers all these evils to come upon us : He would never have thus *for-saken* us, if we had not *for-saken* him first.

O let us realize this, this day—and therefore fly to God by *fasting* and *prayer*, by *humiliation* and *repentance*.

'Tis God only who can help us ; without him vain is all human *policy* and *help*. O that we were duly sensible of this, and would religiously cast all our care upon him !

We must indeed *watch* as well as pray : and not *lie upon our faces* and expect miracles : This was not the way which good Nehemiah took : They did all they could for their own safety, and then repair'd to the throne of grace, and cast themselves upon divine mercy. Let us go and do likewise.

But there is one thing more in which we must imitate them, or all is in vain at last : And that is—We must *covenant* or *solemnly* engage this day to *reform our crying sins*, and to become an *obedient* and *holy* people.

Don't let us trifle in this part of our duty this day ! If we do we loose all the rest. For, if we still regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.

Yea, if we will not for all these terrible things be reformed, we have reason to fear yet seven times worse (if it can be) till we are utterly consumed.

Oh, let us then, with one consent, *search and try our ways and turn to the Lord*. Let us exhort one another, and say, with the Prophet—*Come and let us return to the Lord, for he hath smitten, and he will heal us, he hath broken, and he will bind us up ; after two days he will revive us, and we shall live in his sight.*

We have done nothing against men, our king or our brethren, to bring all this evil upon us, but what was judged absolutely *necessary* to preserve our *liberty*.

And if there was any thing done amiss, sure it don't deserve all this ! From man therefore I take it to be clearly, *unjust, oppressive and cruel*, to the last degree : and find this acknowledg'd by many of the *British parliament* themselves. And who can judge otherwise ? For a *whole city*, nay, a *whole province* is destin'd to destruction, for the suppos'd fault of a few, without ever having been charg'd with that fault ; nay, while our *great enemy* has publickly declar'd, that even *the town*, as such, had no hand in it. And we are condemn'd UNTRIED, UNHEARD, contrary to the *first principles* of justice in all nations.

But,

But, against God, we may not say—What have we done? But, rather,—What have we not done to provoke his pure eyes to anger?

Men may do us wrong; but *God* can do none. He has not suffer'd all this evil to come upon us for nothing! No! But it is for our multiplied transgressions.

And, if we would *stand fast* in our *liberty*, we must secure the divine favour: for in vain is salvation hoped for from any other quarter.

God has done wonderful things for our land in times past, in subduing the Enemies before us, and in delivering us again and again from the yokes of bondage, which were prepared for us. And we rejoiced & shouted abundantly. But, what suitable returns have we made? Did we become a *holier* and *better* people? No! verily! But we have been, and still are, an evil and unthankful people. And, I fear, we grew worse after all our mercies. Wickedness of almost every kind, I fear, prevail'd more than ordinarily.

What *contempt* of *God* and *religion*—of his *word* and *worship*, and *ministers*, and all that belong'd to him! —What horrid *profaneness*—

What *filthiness* & *uncleannefs* among our youth, till many are become a derision! —What *intemperance*—What *injustice* & *oppression*! What *lying* and *backbiting*! What *unchristian strife* & *contention* in *towns* and *churches*! What *thefts* and *burglaries*—Yea, what *murders* are found among us! 'Tis endless to reckon them up—it cannot be done!

But

But let every one *search* and *see* the plague of his own heart—Yea let us search out all our iniquities till we find none. And let us be *humbled* and lay in the dust—And mourn bitterly before God for all the abominations which are found among us, as well as cry mightily unto God. Yea, let the counsel of the Lord be acceptable to you this day—And let us break off from all our iniquities by righteousness, and from our transgressions, by shewing mercy to those who are *poor* and *oppressed* among us, if it may be a lengthning of our tranquility. Without this, all our cries and tears are but a mockery, and will procure us a curse instead of a blessing.

And unless God be better to us than we are to ourselves, all the evils which hang over us, will fall upon us, and perhaps seventimes more (if it can be) till we are reduc'd to the most miserable state of mortals, if not utterly destroyed.

And, if you, and this people, will not hear, my soul, and the souls of all the godly in the land, shall weep in secret places for your *pride* and *sturbborneſs*, and for all the *calamities* and *distresses* which a few days more may bring forth.

O my brethren,—come and let us return to the God of mercy, who delighteth to be gracious! Let us do it without delay! And who knows but the day in which our enemies hope to triumph in the overthrow of all our liberties, God may (as he did to his people of o'd, in the days of *Haman*) make the day of our *deliverance* and

and of the overthrow of our implacable enemies ;
and settle our *rights* on a firmer foundation than
ever.

*Our fathers trusted in God, and he did deliver
them.* And the same Lord yet reigneth, therefore
let New-England, yea let the *earth rejoice* ! For,
I firmly believe, that if we are not grossly want-
ing to ourselves, but commit our selves and our
cause to the God of our fathers, in well doing,
when we have suffer'd a while, he will also deliver
us.

But, if not, the Lord prepare us for the most
evil days, which may be before us ; and give us
grace so to improve them, as to make us thirst
more earnestly for a better world, where the
*wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at
rest.*

A M E N.

